

**Remarks by the MEC for Finance, Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Hon. Mlungisi Mvoko, at the launch of 2022 Tourism Month in Tsitsikamma.**

**01 September 2022**

**Greeting to you Programme Director;**

**The Executive Mayor of the Sarah Baartman District Municipality, Cllr. De Vos;**

**Koukamma Municipality Mayor, Cllr. Yeka,**

**ECPTA board members and management;**

**Head of Department for DEDEAT and senior management;**

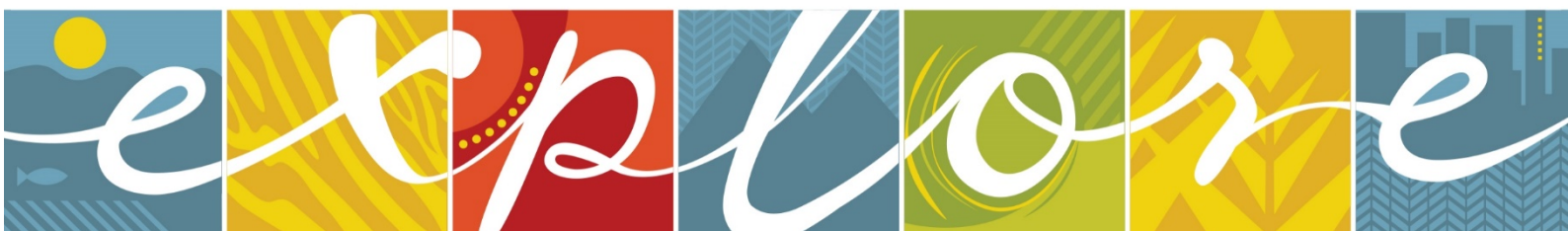
**Representatives from Tsitsikamma National Park;**

**Representatives from our stakeholder Untouched Adventures and all stakeholders present;**

**Esteemed Guests;**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Good Afternoon.**



It's an absolute honour and pleasure to be standing here today and officially launching our provincial tourism month activations in one of our most loved tourist areas.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Tsitsikamma region is truly a treasure trove; its famous description of the 'garden of the garden route', does not do it justice - it actually deserves a more vivid portrayal to encapsulate its beauty. I am not surprised though because our province is filled with vast unique and authentic tourism offerings that cannot be found elsewhere. This is why we pride ourselves as one of the top tourist destinations in the country and in the world.

Programme Director, although not gazetted, but throughout the country we celebrate September as a Tourism Month, also a Heritage Month.

Today, therefore, officially marks the beginning of a number of tourism initiatives that will transpire during the month of September throughout the province, culminating with the celebration of the World Tourism Day on the 27th of September 2022. The purpose of highlighting Tourism Month is to create awareness about domestic tourism activities planned and excite locals to travel their province and country. Today marks the beginning of the season where we consolidate our efforts as the sector to promote the Eastern Cape as a tourist destination of choice.

This year's theme of "rethinking tourism" is fitting as 2022 was expected to witness the rebuilding of tourism after the COVID-19 pandemic. While tourism has been among the hardest hit sectors by the pandemic, the sector has also strongly grown in visibility and relevance at a cross-cutting political, policy and social acceptance level during this period. This theme addresses and celebrates the progress made in the pandemic aftermath and how policy makers and the tourism sector have been able to adapt and rethink tourism to



make the sector more resilient and ensure it is on track towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The theme also emphasizes a critical approach that we have been fostering for the past 2 years, that of materializing the need to put people first and ensure a shared vision for everyone including governments, business, and local communities for a more sustainable, inclusive, and resilient sector.

*Tourism month for us also serves as a focused approach to providing a platform for inclusive dialogue and identification of solutions to realize tourism's potential as a vehicle for recovery and transformation. This includes using the month as a means to amplify the message of tourism as an inspirational and transformational force.*

This for example is evident in the work done by our implementing agency, Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism (ECPTA), where they have been working to establish aggressive smart marketing approaches that spread to audiences far and wide, using digital outputs for both domestic and international tourism promotion. As the CEO Mr Dayimani mentioned, we as a province fully embraced the technological advances of the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution and positioned ourselves favorably by developing a digital strategy that has been serving as a very effective foundation and springboard for our tourism recovery.

Through the agency we have also enhanced efforts to ensuring emerging enterprises grow by providing them with necessary support through training, mentorships, and business linkages. On the other side of the province, as we speak, we have the Ocean View hotel as an active trainer of accommodation



SMME's mentoring them on critical skills like digital marketing, customer care and business management.

Over and above this, we also keep track of changing market trends and have ventured into exploring other available potential markets in countries like Ghana and Nigeria through a partnership with South African Tourism (SAT).

In this regard, we have sent Eastern Cape tour operators to attend trade and road shows to learn from their counterparts and to further promote the province to that emerging market. This is similar to our continued push to ensure SMME participation at this year's WTM Africa and Tourism Indaba.

This is also accompanied by a number of interventions such as training programmes, targeting the unemployed youth through Accredited Training for the Tourist Guiding profession to ensure that the youth have the necessary skills that make them compliant and enable them to be role-players in the tourism mainstream of the region.

Through ECPTA, we will also continue to support Local tourism organizations, district tourism organization and other tourism associations in their development and promotion efforts. The combination of effort has proven to be successful with an exponential increase in social media reach, video views and the province ranking as the most visited province in the country for the domestic market in 2020/21.

Programme Director, the Eastern Cape showed incredible growth in domestic tourism in 2021 by accounting for the largest share of domestic trips as the



top source for origin at 82.7% and destination of domestic travellers at 150.09%. This means that between January and December of 2021 over 5 million trips were made to the province. This is an incredible statistic; we need to build from this to achieve more.

Ladies and gentlemen, Tourism is one of the sectors that the Province has identified as an enabler for economic growth as we reconstruct and recover our economy post the COVID period.

Tourism contributes 3,7% to South Africa's GDP, more than agriculture, utilities, and construction.

Here in the Eastern Cape, tourism provided 104 000 people with work opportunities in the sector and a GDP contribution of R11 billion, at the time when the country, especially the sector was ravaged by effects of Covid-19.

This indicates the massive potential of this sector to growing our economy and creating job opportunities.

As an attempt to boost our tourism potential and ensure diverse and competitive tourism offering in the Province, we have undertaken numerous infrastructure developments to improve our world-class parks, reserves and heritage sites.

ECPTA has eight reserve infrastructure maintenance projects which are on schedule for completion. Funding has been received from the Department of Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism (Dedeat), National Department of Tourism (NDT), National Lottery Commission (NLC) and Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF).

We prioritised four projects which are currently under construction at Hluleka, Mkambathi, Silaka and Dwesa Nature Reserves.



The R41.9M Cape Morgan accommodation and office upgrades funded by DEFF are on schedule.

The hiking trail and beach infrastructure project funded by NDT has received R21M. The beaches fall under the local municipalities of Mbizana, Port St Johns, Nyandeni and Ndlambe. Stages 1 – 4 have been completed for Krantz, Middle Beach and Kowie River in Port Alfred. Concept designs and surveys have been completed for Mzamba and Mtentu. We anticipate the work on these sites to be completed by March 2023.

Also currently under construction are the hiker's huts at Hluleka, Mpande and Mngazana. Designs for Mngcibe Lodge are in process and awaiting authorisation.

The ECPTA has also focused on smaller, though equally important, improvement initiatives that are expected to yield excellent results in both the short and long term. These involve Silaka, Dwesa, Thomas Baines Environmental Education Centre and Brakfontein.

We are erecting 64km of game fencing, funded by DEFF, at Tsolwana/Commando Drift, Oviston and Hluleka Nature reserves.

All these initiatives are meant to boost our tourism ambitions and enable economic growth and job creation.

As we usher in Tourism Month, I want us to acknowledge our strides and celebrate the fact that despite the pandemic we came out shining proving our tourism sector is solid and the proof is in the pudding. Our intensified efforts ranked us number one and now is the time to defend this achievement and amplify this baseline.



As we rethink tourism let us utilise the shift from international to domestic, EC is now more than ever accessible to the man on the street, and this can be explored through the deals currently available that we can go and explore.

Ladies and gentlemen, we want sustainable growth that creates more opportunities for people, especially people in rural areas, and for women, the youth and people living with disabilities. We want growth in tourism to lead to economic and social transformation for our country and we plead for collaboration between government, private sector and communities to bring this to reality.

All of us are partners in ensuring tourism becomes one of the most important and growing sectors of the economy. Someone once called tourism a half-exposed treasure chest. The lid is half-opened and not many of our people get to the jewels but if we all work together, we can prise that lid open, so that the benefits of tourism, and the natural and cultural heritage of our country, can be shared by everyone.

Us individually here shouldn't only experience these tourist attractions through activities such as this one but we should at our own take time with our families and loved ones and visit our beautiful offerings province wide.

As I conclude Programme Director, on behalf of the Eastern Cape and the entire provincial tourism sector, I declare the Eastern Cape Tourism Month open. The Eastern Cape stands ready to welcome you all.

Eastern Cape is yours to explore.

***Thank you very ladies and gentlemen.***

